

STATE OF TENNESSEE

PUBLIC CHAPTER NO. 415

HOUSE BILL NO. 686

By Representatives Richardson, Sherry Jones, Hardaway

Substituted for: Senate Bill No. 638

By Senators Marrero, Harper, Ford

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 37, relative to children 18 years of age and older who are aging out of custody of the department of children's services.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 37, Chapter 2, is amended by adding the following as a new part:

37-2-501.

(a) The executive director of the select committee on children and youth shall establish a non-funded, voluntary, post-custody services advisory council, which shall be responsible for:

(1) Identifying strategies to assess and track effectiveness of post-custody services and the operation of resources centers authorized by this part;

(2) Identifying the following:

(A) strategies for maintaining accurate numbers of children served by post-custody services,

(B) the number of services provided by the department of children's services,

(C) the number of children who accept these services,

(D) reasons why children do not accept such services, and

(E) the number of children that continue their education and the number that do not; and

(3) The advisory council shall report no later than October 31st of each year to the select committee on children and youth,

house children and family affairs committee, house health and human resources committee and senate general welfare, health and human resources committee, making recommendations for the continuing operation of the system of post-custody services and supports;

(b) The department of children's services and other state agencies which provide services or supports to youth transitioning out of state custody shall participate fully in the council and shall respond to the recommendations put forth by the council as appropriate.

37-2-502.

(a) All state agencies which administer cash or in-kind assistance, or both, to youth age eighteen (18) to twenty-four (24), within the course of normal business, shall make reasonable effort to determine if an applicant for assistance has ever been in the custody of the state. If the applicant has been in state custody, the state agency shall share information with applicant regarding possible services to be provided by the department of children's services, other state agencies and community partners.

(b) State agencies shall modify agency forms to identify youth who have been in state custody as the agencies' forms are otherwise revised and updated.

(c) The department of children services may share services information for former foster youth and youth transitioning from state custody through already established models such as, but not limited to, websites, emails, verbal notifications, and or other printed material.

37-2-503.

(a) The private, non-profit community is urged to establish a network to provide information, assistance, services, and supports to persons from sixteen (16) to twenty-four (24) years of age who were in foster care on the person's eighteenth birthday and persons from sixteen (16) to twenty-four (24) years of age who have been in foster care at any time after the person's fourteenth birthday.

(b) The resource centers shall provide or facilitate the assistance necessary to:

(1) Deal with the challenges and barriers associated with the transition into adulthood and early adult years;

(2) Support post-secondary education, vocational training and job skills development for such person;

(3) Find and retain employment, housing, transportation, parenting and family support, health care, mental health care; and

(4) Navigate systems and procedures that impact the person's education, employment, health and mental welfare, and basic needs.

(c) Such services shall be available at any time until the person reaches twenty-four (24) years of age regardless of whether the youth elects to remain in a voluntary post-custody arrangement with the department or the youth chooses to terminate any relationship with the state.

(d) The resource centers shall be supported in part by the department in the community where the centers are located, subject to the availability of funds specifically appropriated for this purpose. The department is authorized and encouraged to share staff with the resource centers, as well as provide financial support .

37-2-504.

In preparing a foster child for independent living prior to the child reaching eighteen (18) years or age, the department shall provide information on the resource centers established pursuant to this part to all children over sixteen (16) years of age in foster care. The information shall include the address of the nearest resource center and services available from the center. Each child shall be encouraged to maintain periodic contact with resource center personnel and to provide current and accurate residence and contact information to the resource center. Ninety (90) days before a child leaves state custody the department of children's services shall notify the child of all information, services, web sites and assistance available for post-custody.

37-2-505.

Nothing in this part shall be construed to require a person to have maintained continuous contact with the resource centers or the department in order to be eligible to receive services from the resource centers or the department.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming law, the public welfare requiring it.

PASSED: June 3, 2009

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KENT WILLIAMS, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ron Ramsey", written over a horizontal line.

RON RAMSEY
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

APPROVED this 11th day of June 2009

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Phil Bredeesen", written over a horizontal line.

PHIL BREDESEN, GOVERNOR